

Area Plan Summary

North End-South Como District Plan

Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul
Recommended by the Planning Commission, July 2, 2004
Adopted by the City Council, July 28, 2004
Amended on August 17, 2005 and August 2, 2006

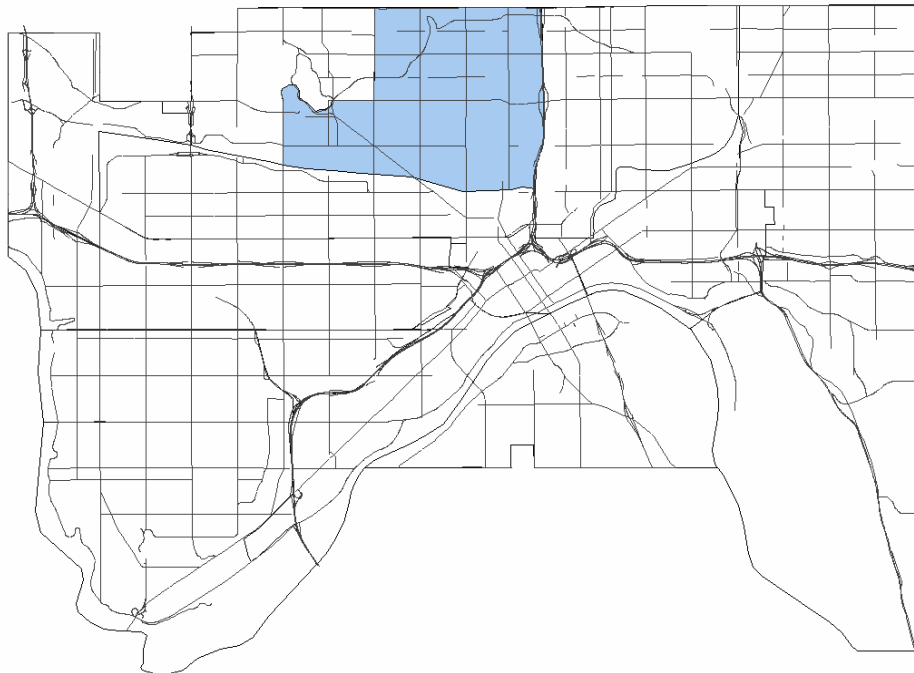
This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the North End-South Como District Plan.

Key goals include:

- *maintain a safe environment,*
- *strengthen community identity and image*
- *maintain and enhance the built environment*
- *preserve and enhance the natural environment*
- *promote life cycle housing*
- *strengthen and revitalize commercial and industrial areas*
- *ensure community-wide access to information and services*
- *promote connectivity within District 6 and the region.*

Location

The North End-South Como (Planning District 6) neighborhood lies generally between I-35E and Lexington Avenue, north of the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad tracks.



Location of District 6 in St. Paul

Vision

North End-South Como will be a safe, attractive, welcoming and vibrant community that has preserved and enhanced its historic character and natural and civic amenities. All its residents will have a diverse choice of housing options through their lifetimes. The commercial and industrial base will be strong and vital. Citizens will have improved connections and access to services and information and to the parks, schools, jobs and institutions they value. Along Wheelock Bluff, publicly owned land will be preserved and/or restored as a habitat for wildlife.

Specific Recommendations and Implementation Steps

Preserve and Enhance the Natural Environment

North End-South Como is located within the Capitol Region Watershed District and many of the plan's recommendations relate to taking greater advantage of this important natural resource. Lake Como, Loeb Lake, McCarrons Lake, Willow Reserve, several wetlands and Trout Brook are significant both as natural amenities and wildlife habitats. But many remain isolated and remote from area residents. Furthermore, much of Trout Brook was diverted to storm sewers as part of past redevelopment efforts to create additional industrial land in the rail corridor.

The plan calls for day-lighting more of Trout Brook, where possible, restoring the Willow Reserve, and creating "green" links to and among key sites. Redesigning Como Boulevard as a parkway is central to that strategy as is acquisition of key railroad property, when possible, and expansion of bicycle and pedestrian trail systems that will connect the neighborhood to the Mississippi River, Como Park and Saint Paul's Grand Round.

The City and the County are encouraged to preserve the views along Wheelock Parkway as identified in Figure Y of the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and to discourage disturbance of the environmentally sensitive areas as identified in Figure EE, Appendix E of the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, other public agencies such as the Capitol Region Watershed District may be able to hold easements for the wetland and slope areas along or near Wheelock Parkway.

The City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County Soil and Water Board, Capitol Region Watershed District, and affected property owners should work together to resolve the erosion and stormwater drainage problems occurring near the Wheelock Bluff area south of Larpenteur Avenue and east of Cumberland Street.

Maintain and Enhance the Built Environment

Overlaying the natural environment is the built environment constructed in phases largely between about 1875 and 1950 along a classic urban street grid. Recommendations in the plan support reinforcing historic patterns by preserving the mainstreet character of Rice Street, adopting design guidelines for new development and redevelopment, creating a design overlay district in the neighborhood around Oakland Cemetery, defining unique gateways around traditional urban design principles, investing in the rehabilitation of existing commercial and residential structures, and encouraging street layouts and designs that are sensitive to wetlands and slopes in the areas near Wheelock Bluff .

Because the community is fully built, recommendations for fundamental land use change are few, but they include:

- Lower Rice Street is recommended to be the site of a mixed use urban village with the development of vacant sites and in coordination with the potential establishment of a commuter rail line along the southern border of the district.
- Industrial uses should be consolidated over time, and appropriately buffered, in the Great Northern Corridor and the Jackson-Arlington Industrial Park. Phased out would be industrial uses in the lower Trout Brook corridor and the marginal auto-related uses south of Oakland Cemetery (east of Rice Street).
- The neighborhood south and east of Loeb Lake, including the Jefferson-Smurfit/Union Brass site, should be evaluated for residential redevelopment.

Among the priorities for new housing is the development of a variety of unit types to meet the life-cycle needs of neighborhood residents. Specifically missing from the current stock are units designed for older persons. Adding to that stock is entirely consistent with plans for more mixed-use transit-related development on lower Rice Street and in the neighborhood south and east of Oakland Cemetery.

District 6 and Sparc also developed a set of voluntary design guidelines for residential construction. Builders, developers, and home owners are strongly recommended to follow the guidelines in planning new construction, landscaping, and addition or improvement to an existing structure. The full text of the design guidelines is available by contacting the District 6 Planning Council or Sparc.

Finally, in any aging neighborhood, continuing efforts need to be made to rehabilitate and/or redevelop the existing housing stock. Priority areas for focused attention include: (1) the neighborhood south and east of Oakland Cemetery, (2) the neighborhood north of Front Street, generally between Victoria and Chatsworth, (3) the two block area west of Lewis Park, (4) the two block area west of Albemarle between Rose and Orange, and (5) the residential pocket between Agate and the Trillium site.

The community will use the opportunities created by new housing construction to add to the stock of owner-occupied units in order to move closer to the citywide ratio of owner-occupied to rental housing of 56:44. (District 6's distribution was 51:49 in 2002, as reported by the Wilder Research Center).

Maintain a Safe Environment

Plan recommendations relate to the full range of issues from pedestrian and traffic safety to crime prevention to public health. Particular emphasis is placed on street design and the design of the public realm, acknowledging their importance in controlling traffic, creating "eyes" on the street and promoting safe pedestrian activity. That emphasis is underscored by companion recommendations calling for a continued police presence on Rice Street and stepped up enforcement of traffic laws, housing codes and property maintenance standards.

The plan calls for systematic attention by the Department of Public Works on the intersections at Maryland/Rice, Maryland/Dale, Arlington/Rice, Jackson/Maryland and Como/Front/Dale, as well as along the length of Rice Street, to determine if there are design measures that would increase vehicular and pedestrian safety. Similarly, traffic calming and enforcement measures are recommended for the district's major thoroughfares: Maryland, Dale, Rice and Jackson.

Finally, issues of public health, particularly concerns about potential threats posed by contaminated sites and exposure to lead, call both for more systematic public education and for mitigation. Properties

deserving focused attention by local and state officials include the western portion of the Jackson-Arlington area and the Jefferson-Smurfit/Union Brass site. To encourage long term environmental health, the plan recommends consideration of "green" design features and construction techniques.

Strengthen Community Identity and Image

In addition to establishing attractive gateways into the community, the plan recommends a full program of marketing the neighborhood, its businesses, housing stock and amenities. The Rice Street Festival is a key element in the neighborhood's marketing strategy and deserves wide public and private support.

City Action

To encourage development according to this vision the City of Saint Paul should:

- Focus, with appropriate plans, 40-acre studies and design guidelines, on key redevelopment areas to include: Rice Street, the area south of Oakland Cemetery (Oakland Village), the area surrounding the Jefferson-Smurfit/Union Brass site and the Como-Front-Dale triangle. Particular attention should be paid, in each instance, to whether TND zoning would support the community's development and design objectives. The Arlington-Jackson Small Area Plan also should be updated and re-certified by the Planning Commission.
- Designate "green" corridors and trails to link parks and open spaces with one another and with key residential areas and commercial nodes for the benefit of pedestrians, bicyclists and wildlife. This includes fully implementing the Trout Brook/Lower Phalen Greenway Plan and establishing Como Boulevard as a parkway.
- Give priority in the capital budget to: full implementation of the Trout Brook Greenway Plan including restoration of the Trillium site and day-lighting Trout Brook, additions to the trail system and development of "green" streets, transit-related improvements (including bus system improvements and the Red Rock Line, if approved), park enhancements (specifically securing Norpac Road as a main entrance to the Trillium site), streetscape improvements along Rice Street and Como/Front/Dale, industrial redevelopment of the Great Northern Corridor and Jackson/Arlington, and housing redevelopment.
- Market existing residential and commercial rehabilitation programs as well as the City's Home Loan Fund.

Planning Commission Findings

The Planning Commission finds that *The North End-South Como Comprehensive Plan* is, in the main, consistent with *The Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan* and other adopted City policies. The Commission also finds that an ownership goal of 56 percent is a feasible community objective. Adopted in this area plan summary, therefore, is the relevant language noted above.

Planning Process

The North End-South Como Comprehensive Plan was prepared by a committee of the District 6 Planning Council with the assistance of a graduate-level planning class from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute. Input included discussions with regional and local agency representatives, a survey of neighborhood businesses, a Comprehensive Plan Open House attended by over 100 residents and a series of working meetings open to the community. The plan was reviewed and adopted by the District 6 Planning Council on February 9, 2004. The Plan Summary

was amended in September 2005 to include reference to a set of voluntary design guidelines for single-family and duplex new construction, and again in August 2006 to include key recommendations from the Wheelock Bluff/Rice Street Plan.